AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims of the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1 to 15. (Cancelled).

16. (New) A terminal end-piece for a fuel assembly of a nuclear reactor, the assembly comprising fuel rods and a skeleton for supporting the fuel rods, the fuel rods extending in a longitudinal direction and being arranged at nodes of a substantially regular network, the support skeleton comprising two terminal end-pieces and elements for connecting the terminal end-pieces, the fuel rods being arranged longitudinally between the terminal end-pieces, comprising:

an arrangement for laterally maintaining the adjacent longitudinal ends of substantially all the fuel rods, the arrangement configured at nodes of the substantially regular network, wherein the maintenance arrangement constitutes an arrangement for longitudinally securing the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods relative to the terminal end-piece, and wherein the end-piece comprises two components for longitudinally clamping between the end pieces the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

17. (New) The end-piece according to claim 16, wherein the maintenance arrangement comprises housings for receiving the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

18. (New) The end-piece according to claim 16, wherein one of the components constitutes an anti-debris filter.

19. (New) The end-piece according to claim 16 wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises projections, to which rings of the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods are fitted.

20. (New) The end-piece according to claim 16 wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises screws that are intended to be engaged in the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

21. (New) The end-piece according to claim 16, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement are snap-fit connections.

22. (New) The end-piece according to claim 16, wherein the end piece comprises a bottom end-piece and in that the adjacent longitudinal ends are the lower ends of the fuel rods.

23. (New) The end-piece according to claim 22, wherein the end piece further comprises feet for support on a lower plate of the core of the nuclear reactor.

24. (New) A fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor, the assembly comprising:

fuel rods; and

a skeleton for supporting the fuel rods, the fuel rods extending in a longitudinal direction and being arranged at nodes of a substantially regular network, the support skeleton comprising:

two terminal end-pieces; and

elements for connecting the terminal end-pieces, the fuel rods being arranged longitudinally between the terminal end-pieces, wherein at least one end-piece is an end-piece according to any one of the preceding claims, in that the maintenance arrangement constitutes an arrangement for longitudinally securing the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods relative to the terminal end-piece, and wherein the end-piece comprises two components that longitudinally clamp between the components the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

25. (New) The assembly according to claim 24, wherein the maintenance arrangement comprises housings that receive the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

26. (New) The assembly according to claim 24, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises projections provided on the end-piece and rings provided at the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods and that are fitted to the projections.

27. (New) The assembly according to claim 26, wherein the rings comprise relief portions for abutment against one of the components.

28. (New) The assembly according to claim 24, wherein the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods comprise widened feet that are clamped between the two components.

29. (New) The assembly according to claim 24, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises screws that abut the end-piece and that are engaged in the adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

30. (New) The assembly according to claims 24, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement are configured to secure through a snap fit.